

MEETING:	COUNCIL
DATE:	20 JULY 2012
TITLE OF REPORT:	STRATEGIC PLAN FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN HEREFORDSHIRE; THE “YES WE CAN” PLAN
PORTFOLIO AREA:	HEALTH AND WELLBEING

CLASSIFICATION: Open

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To consider and approve the *Yes We Can* plan, as the strategic partnership plan for children and young people in Herefordshire.

Recommendation(s)

THAT Council:

- (a) **approves the *Yes We Can* plan as recommended by Cabinet and attached at appendix 1; and**
- (b) **notes the priorities within the *Yes We Can* plan will be considered as part of the Council’s Root and Branch Reviews.**

Key Points Summary

- Herefordshire needs to have a plan focused on improving the wellbeing and life chances of children and young people living, studying and working in the county. The *Yes We Can* plan is the one strategic partnership plan that organisations and individuals who commission and provide services for children and young people are all agreed on and working to. *Yes We Can* is both a positive commitment of partners to working together in this way, and to raising the aspirations of our children and young people. Appendix 1 is the full plan that partners have developed together. Appendix 2 is the version for young people that has been written by the Shadow Board, a consultative group of young people from across the county. Cabinet approved the plan on 14 June for recommendation to Council.
- The plan contains the four key priorities that partners who provide services for children and young people will work to over the next 3 years:
 - Helping families, parents and carers to help themselves, particularly in the early years

of their children's lives

- Promoting health and well-being
 - Achieving success in life, learning and future employment
 - Protecting children from harm
- These priorities are drawn from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (now the Integrated Needs Assessment - INA), and consultation with partners and children and young people. The INA highlights the needs of the county, and these are addressed in the new Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Specific elements for children and young people are drawn out in the *Yes We Can* plan; over time it is likely that the *Yes We Can* plan and any subsequent plans are in fact a delivery plan of the overarching Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The Council's contribution to the plan is captured within the Joint Corporate Plan and associated Delivery plans. The Root and Branch reviews will also undertake a strategic overview of services provided to children, young people and their families/carers.
 - The *Yes We Can* plan is a partnership plan and has been in place for the last year. (Despite not being a statutory plan it is still listed as requiring Council approval if a plan is developed). There has been a particular focus during 2011 on the safeguarding aspects with partners, understanding and working to ensure children are in the right system, along with the continued drive for early intervention through the multi-agency groups and use of the common assessment framework (CAF). Improving attainment in the Early Year Foundation Stage Profile and Key Stage 2 was also a key area of focus and there were substantial improvements in both areas evidenced in the 2011 examination results. The plan itself (highlighted in the triangle of need diagrams (page 5 of the plan)) shows the changes that have taken place over the last year regarding children accessing services.
 - Draft recommendations for action from the 2012 INA include tackling obesity and promoting healthy lifestyle choices; continued emphasis on improving educational achievement at Early Years and Foundation Programme, primary and secondary school children; tackling family poverty; and more analysis of domestic violence and people living with learning disabilities. All these areas are already captured within the *Yes We Can* plan priorities and pledges.
 - During 2012 the key areas for focus will include:
 - reducing the numbers of children subject to a child protection plan and those looked after, in line with statistical neighbours;
 - improving the educational attainment of Herefordshire children at all key stages in order to achieve top quartile performance nationally
 - developing a programme for schools to support Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE)
 - implementing the children and young people's elements of the Health and Wellbeing Board's Strategy specifically around early years and alcohol consumption
 - delivery of services in light of the updated child poverty needs assessment
 - building on the multi-agency group approach and edge of care programme to deliver further intensive support to families as part of the government's community budgets for "troubled families" programme.

- The plan will be driven and delivered by the Children and Young People’s Partnership Forum, a strategic county-wide partnership. This Forum replaces the previous Children’s Trust arrangements, which were statutory. Children’s Trusts were nationally prescribed as to their role and in Herefordshire the groups, governance and delivery plans have all now been removed. The new forum is for all partners to act together and lead their individual agency to improve opportunities and outcomes as outlined in the plan.
- The role of Director of Children’s Services and the Lead Member for Children’s Services are both statutory and they hold partners to account through the Children and Young People’s Partnership Forum.
- Herefordshire has had a Children and Young People’s Plan in place since 2005. The Yes We Can plan is the third plan for Herefordshire but is no longer a statutory requirement. This is a partnership plan, not a Council plan.

Alternative Options

- 1 There is no longer a statutory requirement to have a plan of this nature. However, partners and stakeholders are committed to working together and therefore the plan will help to maintain a focus and vision on the desired outcomes for children and young people living, studying and working in Herefordshire.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 2 Whilst there is no longer a statutory duty on the local authority to publish a children and young people’s plan, it is still a requirement under the Budget and Policy Framework to seek Council approval if such a plan is developed by partners. The plan is a crucial vehicle to enable services to be delivered effectively across partners to improve outcomes for children and young people in Herefordshire.

Introduction and Background

- 3 This is the third children and young people’s plan for Herefordshire; the last one being approved by Council in May 2008. The plan is intended to be the one strategic plan that all partners who commission or provide services to children and young people would align with and work to. Children’s Trusts were the vehicle for co-ordinating these partnership arrangements.
- 4 The legislation around Children’s Trusts and the Children and Young People’s Plan was revoked in 2011 meaning that local areas could decide for themselves what arrangements they wanted in place. In Herefordshire, partners were very keen to continue working together at both a strategic and operational level and there is still a statutory “duty to co-operate” on certain partners. For partners to really focus on the key priorities that could only be achieved by working together, it was agreed to develop a plan – much like the previous Children and Young People’s Plan but without the required statutory guidance so it could be much simpler and truly reflect local needs.

Key Considerations

- 5 The new Children and Young People’s Partnership Forum is now in place and replaces what was the Children’s Trust Board and associated groups. The Forum is made up of a wide range of partners listed below. It has key relationships with the Herefordshire Safeguarding

Children Board (HSCB) and the Health and Well-Being Board. The Forum is the one partnership group that focuses on the holistic needs of children and young people.

Partners include:

Herefordshire Council
Herefordshire Primary Care Trust, including GPs
Wye Valley NHS Trust
Schools
Colleges
Worcestershire and Herefordshire Youth Offending Service
Jobcentre Plus
West Mercia Probation Trust
West Mercia Police
Private, voluntary and community sector groups
Children, young people and parents / carers

6 The Forum will be the lead partnership group that ensures delivery of the *Yes We Can* plan, and the recently approved Child Poverty strategy which is a mandatory document. Both documents are very closely aligned, both being based on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, and both clearly linking to the Herefordshire Public Services Joint Corporate Plan.

7 The *Yes We Can* plan is attached at appendix 1. The plan has been active during 2011, but requires final Council approval as it is still included within the Budget and Policy Framework. The plan therefore has been refreshed for 2012 although the four main priorities and pledges have remained the same. During 2011 there has been an particular focus on:

- safeguarding children by understanding and working to ensure children are in the right system, along with the continued drive for early intervention through the multi-agency groups and use of the common assessment framework (CAF).

- the Children's Centres have developed further, particularly with health partners in offering antenatal and postnatal support (specifically breastfeeding and positive parenting) and early language support. Delivery of health child programme for 0-5 year olds will be through children's centres

- performance monitoring and interventions across all Early Year providers and LA maintained schools targeting underperforming schools/settings. There were improvements in the 2011 examination results in both Key Stage 2 and Early Year Foundation Stage Profile

The plan itself (highlighted in the triangle of need diagrams) shows the changes that have taken place over the last year regarding children accessing services.

8 The plan takes a new approach and looks to work in a partnership way, enabling working relationships and also asking organisations and communities to pledge activity and support. Partners have identified pledges they could support so that progress can be monitored. Many of these pledges are not new and partners are already working on them. The benefit is to work on these collaboratively to make a bigger impact, avoid duplication and make better use of scarce resources. Partners can use the plan to challenge and hold each other to account via the Forum meetings which will take place three times a year. The plan specifically calls on individuals, groups and agencies to consider what they can do to support the priorities and pledges.

- 9 The Shadow Board, a consultative group of young people aged 11-19 years, has made significant contributions to the priorities within the plan and the design of the final document. They have in fact designed their own version specifically aimed at young people (appendix 2). A poster version has also been designed – again with the help of the Shadow Board. The plan, in all its forms, does therefore need to be widely promoted and made easily accessible within resource constraints; this is mainly through the council’s website.

Community Impact

- 10 The plan provides the key priority areas for the county as a whole. From these priorities there is a need to focus services around the nine locality areas identified by Herefordshire Public Services. Partners have already committed to working in this way and working more closely with the communities they serve. In this way the needs of these communities can be mapped to support a more targeted approach to providing services. This information will be used to inform future priorities and therefore more effective commissioning intentions in future. The voice of the children, young people and their families will be a key component in this commissioning cycle.

Equality and Human Rights

- 11 The plan does pay due regard to the public sector equality duty : -

Under Section 149, the "General Duty" on public authorities is set out thus:

"A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct ... prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it."

- 12 The plan’s priorities are to improve the life chances and outcomes of all young people; to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation towards and between children and young people. They are also to create an environment that offers the opportunity for children and young people from all backgrounds to get on well together and take advantage of life chances. The Shadow Board were clear that children don’t want to be labelled and services should have the same aspirations for all children and young people so the priorities are specifically written as such. However, there are specific pledges within the plan for more vulnerable groups including looked after children, children with disabilities and those living in poverty.

Financial Implications

- 13 The plan will be used as the basis for commissioning services for children and young people in Herefordshire i.e. resources will move to focus on these priorities. It will also be used to make the most of existing resources across partners targeted towards children and young people.

- 14 For the Council this plan should drive focus for a number of service areas that work closely with children and young people e.g. housing, cultural services. The biggest contribution will be from the Children and Young People's Provider Services, within the People's Services Directorate.
- 15 The Council is facing significant challenges in financial terms and through the national settlement and reductions in funding. The Council's five year financial strategy includes an estimated 29.7% reduction in government formula grant. Budget decisions have been based on a set of core principles that include Supporting the Vulnerable. The process also includes fundamentally challenging what the council does to ensure appropriate use of public funding and quality of service. Net reductions in Herefordshire Council Children's Services budget from 10/11 to 11/12 amounted to some £3 million as a result of central government grant cuts. Further reductions are required in 12/13 of £1.2million, although this is offset by an increase in grants for the year only so that the overall reduction is £0.7million; however this is net of an additional investment of approximately £1.5m in Children's social care. This creates a considerable challenge to deliver effective services in the current financial climate.

Legal Implications

- 16 The Children and Young People's Plan is part of the Council's budget and policy framework, but is no longer a statutory requirement.
- 17 Although the plan is no longer a statutory requirement there is strong evidence of partnership commitment to collaborative working and to have a plan and forum that "holds the ring" for children and young people in Herefordshire.

Risk Management

- 18 There needs to be strong leadership from the partners to ensure that partnership planning and support remains at a county level to raise the issues facing children and their families. This needs to link with the move to locality based approaches and those partnerships which are statutory e.g. HSCB and Health and Wellbeing Board. The Children and Young People's Partnership Forum will champion holistic approaches to the needs of children, young people and families and provide the other partnership arrangements with the confidence that they are appropriately addressing these issues in their work.

Consultees

- 19 To inform the draft priorities a wide range of people were consulted. The "Have Your Say" campaign in 2010 /11 was held specifically to capture the important things for children and young people and included events and sessions for over 100 primary and secondary school pupils and particular vulnerable groups e.g. teenage parents, looked after children and travellers. A poster campaign also helped to gather views from parents, early years settings, schools and colleges.
- 20 The draft plan was then widely circulated as part of a 12 week consultation. This included all the partners of the Children's Trust including schools and colleges, and third sector groups and organisations. The comments received were then taken into account in producing the final plan. The plan was then agreed by the Children's Trust Board at the time and subsequently by the Children and Young People's Partnership Forum.
- 21 The Shadow Board had significant input to this plan as highlighted in paragraph 9 above. As well as producing their own version they also chose the name for the plan.

Appendices

22 Appendix 1 –“Yes We Can” – the plan to support children, young people and families

Appendix 2 – The “Yes We Can” plan for young people, written by the Shadow Board

Background Papers

- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment